The Theosophical FORUM

OCTOBER 1900

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THE TRUE POWER.

"In the silences of a deep, strong life, lie great wells of force, and all who approach that life bathe therein, whether consciously or unconsciously. It is enough for you if you can find such to be within yourself, enough to keep its waters pure and sweet,—let them say what they will. For this is the truest teaching, the teaching that endures, and without it all words or acts are valueless. That which you live, all men in time will know. And its power over them will be greater as they find it within themselves—not emanating from you or any other source. The flowers growing on the river's bank owe their life to its refreshing flow, but the river considers them not, content to fulfill the law of its being and seek the ocean. Thus we often do most for others when we are not thinking of it, but striving merely in each moment for what is best and highest. The good, therefore, streams through us, and accomplishes far more by such impersonality. I would have you desire then that good should be accomplished, rather than that you should accomplish it."

CAVÉ.

STAND ALONE.

Interdependence is the foundation stone of all social life. The superstructure is composed of individual lives. The evolution, or progress, of a social body, is the sum total of that of all the individuals, less the offset resulting from the reactionary efforts of the laggards and the willfully evil. The progress of the whole, therefore, depends on the advance of the individual.

The initial, of individual advance, resides in the creative will. Interdependence of creative will produces social lethargy. Individual progress results from individual initiative.

Sheep await the action of the bell-wether. The flock moves only as the leader suggests. The gregarious animal represents a high state of interdependence; in proportion as it depends on leadership, and lacks independent initiative, does it retard progress. Absolute dependence on leadership gives minimum advance, approaching stagnation.

Every human being meets the problem of judgment, and the necessity of initiative, at the threshold of each advance; nor does he advance unless he passes that judgment and takes that initiative. If he moves because others do, he merely changes his environment. With no creative will there is no progress. He must see, know, judge, dare, will, act, in order to create. He grows, progresses, by just the amount that he makes Truth a part of himself. Thus, to create, is to build the personal into the real, the eternal Self.

To see, know, judge, dare, will, act, create, one must stand alone. Only by standing alone can one do all these things; only thus can one progress.

An authority tells you that a thing is "this" or "that;" do you see it? "No." Do you accept it because that other says that it is so? "Yes." Then it is not yours: it is his; he sees, he knows it; you do not. You have confidence in him, not in it and not in "This" or "That." Thus we may not teach; but we can learn. No other can learn for us. Others may indicate a Path, but we must walk the journey. They may point to the Light, but we must open, and use, our own eyes and see it for ourselves; they may interpret the

Law, but we must recognize in it the Truth. To us nothing is truth except what our inner consciousness nominates truth. Each must, for himself, pass final judgment on Verity.

Perfect freedom is a condition of the Master Mind. It attains on any plane of consciousness only as we perceive, cognize, control and master that plane, and as we know ourselves masters, and self-conscious masters, of it. Nor are we apt to gain mastery of one plane until we have fully subjugated the plane of consciousness just below. We may not hope to advance until we have made the Path we have already trodden a part of ourselves. But we must be free of all that lies within, else we are not masters. Do we look to any other for aid, for support, for comfort, for sympathy, for approval, do we hestitate, in our inner consciousness, as to the truth or right, then we are not master, and in-so-far as we are not master, we are not wholly free.

It is better that we die in the attempt to do our duty, or to follow the path as we see it, than that we succeed in doing well a duty shown us by another, or follow a path dictated by authority. It is better that we fall into error by ourselves, suffer pain, and learn truth, than failing to try, or depending on others, we do nothing or remain passive. It is better to open our eyes and see sorrow and suffering, even though the knowledge be of evil, than to close them and remain ignorant; it is better to judge wrongly, than to blindly accept the judgment of another; it is better to dare and die, than to be a coward and live; it is better to act, than to stagnate, and it is better to create and to build, than to destroy.

Every human being has a splendid destiny; his evolution is different from that of every other, and his requirements are different. He makes his own fate; he builds his own character; he pulls away the clouds which obscure the vision of his soul. No one else can do this work for him. Others may impede his progress, but they cannot help him on his way. If they cannot help him neither can he help them. Each must do his own labor. The vital work that each one does, that which produces soul advancement, or which brings him into the knowledge of Truth, he does alone, unsupported and uninfluenced.

The ideal government is no government; the next best is an

absolute monarchy with the King a Master Soul. The ideal community is where government is unnecessary, where the individual is absolutely free and always acts upon his own initiative, but in accordance with the Law. The highest ideal of government is impossible of attainment until all the individuals are free, on every plane of manifestation, and thus are masters of themselves, have knowledge of the Law and live ideal lives. Until that time shall come men must combine and make laws for their government and those laws will always be the results of compromise.

When each individual can stand alone and see, know, dare, will, act, and create for himself, then there will be no compromise with error and ignorance; then will the world be perfect; then will men be Divine.

DUTY.

"My father does not want me to read theosophical books and, of course, absolutely forbids my joining the Society. Do you think it would be right for me to disregard his wishes and continue my studies? I want to do what is right, but it seems to me that he is interfering with my free will when he forbids me to read and study subjects I like, simply because he does not approve of them."

"My wife is a devout church member and she thinks I am imperilling my soul by my Theosophical studies. It is a bitter grief to her and she has become quite ill worrying over it. It seems to me that no individual has the right to restrict the mental freedom of another and yet my conscience does not enable me to take the attitude that I should disregard her prejudices. Can you give me any advice on the subject?"

"I have been a member of the Theosophical Society for many years and have long wanted to join the Esoteric Section, but my husband thinks it is a fraud and a money-making scheme and has forbidden me to have anything to do with it. As it is a secret organization of course I could join and he would never know, but I do not like to do this without an assurance that it would be all right. Please advise me."

Such are typical samples of hundreds of questions which come in to the correspondents at any Theosophical Headquarters. They differ in detail, but they all ring the changes on the one basic fact, to wit: when Karma has put a person in circumstances that prevent his following his wishes as to Theosophical study and work, is it ever right to sweep those conditions aside, to forcibly rise above the limiting environment? The reply to the question is not as simple as one would think.

Now I believe that whenever we have to deal with a class of questions like this, the only safe thing to do is to find out the fundamental governing principle and apply it. This sometimes does not seem to fit the case, or, at any rate, it seems to work great hardship in special cases; but I believe that it is the only thing to do.

Fundamental principles are fundamental principles. That is,

they are always right or they would not be fundamental. We forget this. If we didn't, but few of us would make the mistakes we do, for the majority probably nearly always do what they think to be right. The trouble is that while we know the Laws that govern the Universe, for they are exceedingly simple and have been repeatedly explained, none of us has, as yet, been able to apply them at all times.

We see much more clearly the principle that is involved in a given difficulty belonging to a friend, than when we are ourselves concerned, and my experience has been that if we cannot see for ourselves the principle that governs any given trouble of our own, we are incapable of appreciating it, no matter how clearly it may be explained to us by another. We understand the principle, but we do not see how it applies to our case, and so we do the wrong thing. If we see the principle for ourselves, then it is plain sailing and that means that we have learned the lesson taught by some particular experience. If we have not learned that lesson, we find it out by our mistake, and unless we are fools, we won't make that particular mistake again.

Now all this brings us to the point. What principle governs the case of those whose Karma restricts their free opportunity to embrace a theosophical life, to study and work as they desire? Is it that difficulties are put in their way for them to surmount? Or is it that Karma has placed them in a given environment from which they must patiently work their way, no matter at what cost to their desires?

I think that it is the latter.

And consequently whenever I am rash enough to advise anyone in a personal matter, I always advocate patient acceptance of present conditions, even if that means that no Theosophical work or study can be done this incarnation. It does not mean though that the theosophical life cannot be led. No one, not even the highest adept, could prevent anyone who desired from living a theosophical life, and it is this fact which takes the sting out of what otherwise would be an apparently hopeless situation.

If a man has a wife who objects to his theosophical work and studies, he should remember that Karma has married him to that

wife, that he owes his first duty to her, and that consequently if her desires and preferences are contrary to his own, it is the higher course for him to submit, patiently waiting until Karma gives him a free and untrammeled opportunity to follow his ideals. In the meantime he can follow his ideals interiorly, can live the life, can think the thoughts, can have as much good effect upon the world, as if he spent most of his evenings at meetings and lectures.

What good would membership in the E. S. T. do anyone if it was assumed at the sacrifice of a plain duty owed a husband? nor does it alter the duty because the second party may be unreasonable and mistaken, or even unjust and tyrannical. Our duty is rarely, if ever, altered by the failings of others.

It was Karma after all that tied us to the tyrannical individual, and we must work out the connection to its legitimate end, no matter at what cost. If it is very hard, it is because we have been very bad in the past; but in any event we can be sure that it is just as it should be and that there is no short cut to the end. If we do try to cross, sooner or later we will find ourselves against an impassable wall, and we will have to go all the way back and traverse the original and longer road; and the chances are that that road was not improved by age; it will be rougher and more arduous than when we originally refused to take it.

After all is said and done, each must judge, just as each must act for himself. We cannot eat so that another is nourished (Yes, I see the flaw in this analogy!) nor can we think for another so that he will not make mistakes. We must make our own mistakes, must win our own victories, must do our own thinking. Each has his own life to lead which is different from every other life in the universe.

A deep and steady current runs through it and fortunate indeed is he who can find and follow this current, and who is never led astray by the eddies, whirlpools and cross currents of his life's stream. If we go deep enough we will always find the true current, for it is of the Soul and is always there, always active, always moving; albeit, so quietly, that often we cannot detect it at all, unless we meditate and make strong search for it.

Unfortunately it is usually the hardest thing to do, which in any given case, we know to be right thing. So true is this, that we can usually decide in advance of our search what is or what is not right, by finding out what is the hardest. That is because we learn through trial and suffering and grow through temptation and pain. It is said that only the very strongest natures can be taught through happiness and pleasure. We are children after all and need to be punished before we will be good.

And so in the matter of duty, it is only after countless failures that we learn that the shortest way is to perform unflinchingly every duty to the uttermost limit, even if some apparently insignificant thing requires the sacrifice of a life-time's desires. I think that some of us try to balance things in our minds and compromise with the devil in that way. We have some little thing to do, some trivial action that seems of little importance to us or to anyone else, and it can only be done by the expenditure of an amount of energy out of all proportion to what appears to be the results; so we let it go, perhaps consoling ourselves with the reflection that we will use that saved energy to do something much more valuable and beneficial to others. But we were fools, and down in our hearts we know that we were fools, for we know that that little thing has to be done, and will never be easier, and that it was simply an excuse of the brain mind to avoid an unpleasant duty.

We trick and play with ourselves in many such ways in order to save trouble. But there are no distinctions between duties. Every duty is a *duty* and that tells the whole story.

There are no little duties or big duties, or important duties or comparatively unimportant duties. They are just all *duties*, and each one is as necessary to be done as any other.

Nor do they ever conflict as so many seem to think. There is always a duty for the given moment and it never conflicts with any other duty, for we can only have one duty at a time.

I have known one conscientious woman who would be really troubled because she could not decide whether she should go to town and shop to-morrow or stay at home and do the mending. She hated them both equally, both were duties, and she couldn't do both. I always felt that her duty was to stop worrying about that particular dead-lock; and that if she did, something would happen before tomorrow which would make quite clear which of the two courses was the right one to follow.

Most of our so-called cases of conflicting duties come either from trying to make premature decisions, or because we secretly want to do one thing, and really know we ought to do the other, and we are trying to make up our minds whether to do as we ought or as we want. I think we can lay down two fundamental principles in this connection:

I. There is always one duty to be done at a given moment and no more, and

II. Every duty is worth doing and worth doing well no matter how insignificant it may seem, nor how much sacrifice it involves, nor how much energy is required to do it.

ANCIENT AND MODERN PHYSICS.

II.

To the savage, matter appears in two forms—solid and liquid. As he advances a step he learns it has three forms—solid, liquid and gas. He cannot see the gas, but he knows it is there.

A little further on he learns that matter as he knows it is only a minute portion of the great universe of matter—the few chords that can be struck on the five strings of his senses, and limited to one octave or key.

Whether the particular matter he investigates has a solid, a liquid, or a gaseous form depends upon its rate of vibration. If it is a liquid, by raising its rate of vibration one third it becomes a gas; by reducing it one third it becomes a solid.

Each kind of matter has vibration only through one octave. It is known to us only by its vibration in that octave. Each kind of matter has a different octave—is set on a higher or lower key, so to speak, but all octaves of vibration are between the highest of hydrogen gas and the lowest of carbon.

In mechanical compounds, such as air or brass, the rate of vibration of the compound is the least common multiple of the two or more rates. In chemical compounds, such as water or alcohol, the rate is that of the highest, the others uniting in harmonic fractions.

All matter as we know it through our senses—prakriti, as it is called in the Secret Doctrine to distinguish it from non-sensual matter—is the vibration of an universal Something, we do not know what, through these different octaves. The elementary substances (so-called) are one and the same thing—this Something—in different keys and chords of vibration; keys that run into one another, producing all sorts of beautiful harmonies.

Taking any one of these elements, or any of their compounds, all we know of it is limited strictly to its changes during vibration through one octave. What happens when the vibration goes above or below the octave has not yet been treated hypothetically.

While some elements are vibrating on higher and some on lower

keys, we can consider them all as vibrating within one great octave, that octave of the universal Something which produces sensual matter, or prakriti.

But matter is not confined, we know, to this great octave, although our sensual knowledge of it is strictly confined to it.

How do we know it?

Knowledge comes to us in two ways, and there are two kinds of knowledge.

1. That which comes through our senses, by observation and experience. This includes reasoning from relation.

2. That which comes through intuition—or as some writers inaccurately say, "through the formal laws of thought."

All the observation and experience of the rising and the setting of the sun for a thousand centuries could only have confirmed the first natural belief that it revolved daily around the earth; nor by joining this experience with other experiences could any deduction have come from our reason that would have opposed it. Not our reason, but our intuition said that the sun stood still and the earth revolved daily. The oldest books in existence tell us that this axial revolution of the earth was not only known in the very dawn of time, but that it has been known to every race (except our own of European savages) from before the time thought was first transmitted by writing.

Ask the ablest living geographer or physicist to prove to you that the earth revolves daily, and he will reply that it would be the job of his life. It can be done at great expense and great labor, but that is because we know the answer and can invent a way of showing it, not because there are any observations from which a deduction would naturally follow.

Nearly if not all our great discoveries have come to us through intuition, and not from observation and experience. When we know the lines on which to work, when intuition has given us the KEY, then the observation and experience men prize so highly, and the reason they worship so devoutly, will fill in the details. The knowledge that flows from observation, and the reasoning from the facts it records, is never more than relatively true, it is always limited by the facts, and any addition to the facts requires the whole

thing to be restated. We never know all the facts; seldom even the more important; and reason grasps only details.

Lamarck's theory of evolution, known to all Asiatic races from time immemorial, was the intuitional and absolute knowledge that comes to all men when they reach a certain stage of development. Reason could never have furnished it from the facts, as Cuvier proved in the great debate in the French Academy in 1842, when he knocked Lamarck out, for the time being, because "it did not conform to the facts, and did not follow from any relation of the facts."

Darwin's theory of the Survival of the Fittest in the struggle for existence, as an explanation of the origin of species, was from observation and experience. It was based on observed facts. But Darwin was an evoluionist—a disciple of Lamarck. He held the Key. He used the Key. The value of Darwin's work does not lie in his discovering that some bugs have been derived from other bugs, and that the intermediate bugs have died off. Its overwhelming value to mankind was in showing that work on the theory of evolution was correct work, and that the theory was true. When the intuition of man points out the way, the reason of man can follow the path and macadam road. It usually does and claims all the credit for itself as the original discoverer.

This knowledge through intuition is absolute and exact. It is not relatively true. It is absolutely and invariably true. No additional facts will ever modify it, or require a restatement.

When Sir William Hamilton based his Logic on the dictum that "All knowledge is relative, and only relatively true," the proposition was self-evidently false. It was in itself a statement of absolute knowledge about a certain thing. It was in itself knowledge that was not relative. *All* knowledge could not be relative if this knowledge was not. This knowledge could not be either absolute or relative without upsetting his whole proposition, for, if relative, then it was not always true; and if absolute, then it was never true.

Sir William did not know the distinction between the two kinds of knowledge, and what he meant to say was that "All knowledge obtained by observation and experience is relative, and only relatively true."

His knowledge of this Relativity was not obtained by observation, or from reason. It could not possibly have been obtained in that way. It came from intuition, and it was absolute and exact. A man may have absolute and exact knowledge, and yet not be able to put it into words that exactly express it to another. Hamilton had this knowledge. But it was not clearly formulated even in his own mind. He had two separate and distinct meanings for the word "knowledge," without being conscious of it.

We have yet to coin a proper word to express what comes to us through intuition. The old English word "wisdom" originally did. The old verb "wis" meant what a man knew without being told it, as "ken" meant knowledge by experience. Try and prove by reason that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, or that a part can never be greater than the whole, and your reason has an impossible task. "You must take them for axioms," it says. You must take them because you wis them, not because you know (ken) them.

Intuitional knowledge must not be confounded with the relative knowledge that flows through the reason: that "If the sum of two numbers is one and their difference is five," the numbers are minus two and plus three.

The point cannot be too strongly enforced that there is a distinction between the sources of what we know, and that while all we know through our sensations is only relatively true, that which we know from intuition is invariably and absolutely true. This is seen through a glass darkly, in theology, where intuition is called inspiration and not differentiated from reason.

The false notion that we can only learn by observation and experience, that the concept can never transcend the observation, that we can only know what we can prove to our senses, has wrought incalculable injury to progress in philosophy.

Because our sensual knowledge of matter begins and ends with vibration in one octave, it does not follow that this ends our knowledge of it. We may have intuitional knowledge, and this intuitional knowledge is as susceptible to reason as if we had obtained it by observation.

The knowledge that comes through intuition tells us of matter

vibrating in another great octave just beyond our own, which Science has chosen to name the Etheric octave, or plane. The instant our intuition reveals the cause of phenomena, our reason drops in and tells us it is the chording vibration of the matter of the two planes—the physical and etheric—that produces all physical phenomena. It goes further and explains its variations.

This knowledge of another octave or plane of matter comes from the logical relations of matter and its physical phenomena; but there was nothing in the observation or experience of mankind that would have lead us to infer from reason an etheric plane of matter. It was "revealed" truth. But the flash of revelation having once made the path apparent, the light of reason carries us through all the winding ways. Our knowledge of the ether is not guess-work or fancy, any more than our geometry is, because it is based on axioms our reason cannot prove. In both cases the basic axioms are obtained from intuition; the structural work from reason. Our knowledge of the ether may be as absolute and exact as our knowledge of prakriti, working on physical as we work on geometrical axioms.

The recognition of the two sources of knowledge, the work of the spirit within us and of the mind within us, is absolutely necessary to correctly comprehend the true significance of the results of modern science, and to accept the ancient.

MIND'S DIRECT ACTION.

He who would be an occultist must, while still in the flesh, master those states of consciousness through which in succession the soul passes after the death of the physical body. But to confuse these states is not to correlate them; and without clear, concise, logical thinking, and a strictly rational philosophy, the student is almost certain to become hopelessly confused as soon as he arouses the chaotic psychic consciousness that corresponds to the dream-life. The planes of life have to be kept distinct, and studied separately, in order to trace the relations between them.

Concentration of thought, observation, verification, analysis and classification are necessary; and slovenly thinking, due to day-dreaming and mind-wandering, cannot be too carefully guarded against. Mental concentration alone leads to noëtic action, the power of the soul to gain direct knowledge, independently of the senses and all ordinary processes of cognition and intellection. In the real "trance" the soul is acting *direct,* discarding for the time the bodily and psychic organs and even the mental faculties, and employing only the essential power of *knowing;* and on each of the planes of being it has this power of direct cognition.

The "four trances" of the occultist relate to this noëtic action on the four planes, and have nothing in common with the various phases of temporary paralysis usually known as "trances," as those induced by self-hypnosis, mental vacuity, and the like. In the lowest of the "four trances" the soul, or Nous, cognizes the realities of the material world, apart from the illusionary impressions conveyed by the physical senses, and though the body is apparently entranced the consciousness is in fact on the physical plane. In the second of the "trances" the soul deals similarly with the psychic plane; and so on, upward. The real earth, the material world, is as unknown to the unspiritualized man as is the highest heaven. A man is truly *awake* in what is commonly called the "waking state" only when he has the noëtic consciousness on that plane. The "third eye" can act in each of the four planes.

Obviously, this power of direct knowledge is the one thing to be sought. Without it, only illusions are perceived. The first step is to become really awake on this plane; the man who exploits dreamland and wittingly or unwittingly adds its subtler illusions to those of the material world merely adds to the sum of the things that he does not understand, and through the confusing of two planes increases the difficulty of gaining clear insight into the intelligible side of Nature. By accentuating the phenomenal, he departs still further from the noumenal.

Carefully consider any system of theology, any creed formulated by religious enthusiasts, and you will find that it could not possibly have been arrived at through normal healthy intellectual processes, but that it bears unmistakably the peculiarities of the incoherent dream-consciousness, the semi-automatic action of the lower psychic and mental faculties coming into play when the soul is not controlling them. Fantastic, illogical, incongruous and unfeeling, they show that the soul, the source of all that is logical, harmonious in proportion, and of all-inclusive tenderness, had no share in producing them.

Neither the soul nor the intellect could have formulated, say, the Westminster Confession of Faith; such nightmares are begotten only by the psycho-animal self of dreamland; when a man writes that infants not "elected," dying in infancy, can not be saved, "and to assert that they may is very pernicious and to be detested," we may be very sure that his soul was not in control of his brain when he wrote it. If the "scientific spirit" had done no other service than to awaken religion from the half-sleep that breeds such brutal dreams in the minds of men, it should be welcomed for that alone.

And if ever the Theosophists reject, or lose sight of, the scientific and philosophic aspects of Theosophy, the movement will not only deteriorate, but depart from the sole method of acquiring and retaining esoteric knowledge.

For the human mind is so constituted that, when it loses the power to add to its store of knowledge, it can not preserve uncorrupted the truths already learned: they become memories only, and the mind, restive under what has become a wearisome recollective burden, either keeps restlessly shifting these truths about, disturb-

ing their relations, and in recalling by incessant repetition these memorial impressions unduly intensifies some of them and weakens, obliterates or distorts the others, or else it casts the whole burden aside and finds surcease in forgetfulness.

The mind, uncontrolled and working automatically from what is usually termed "the force of habit," is the creator of illusion; but it is through the mind, by tracing out and mastering the intricate processes of thought, that illusion is dispelled and the noëtic consciousness arrived at. This mastery of the mind involves the cultivation of a most retentive memory; for memory is implicated in every action of the mental powers, which cannot be exercised to their full extent if the memory is in any way defective.

Yet memory is not a faculty of the mind, distinct from the other faculties. Each mental act carries with it a memory, and memories are always concrete. Impressions received by the mind, stored away, and revived, either fortuitously by the association of them with similar impressions received later, or at will by turning the consciousness upon them, constitute memory. The psychic body of man is made up of these memory-impressions; their successive awakening calls into play desire, aversion, and the lust for objective life, keeping the senses directed toward external images, and instigating the organs of action.

Thus the karma of a man consists mainly of the latent memories of the past: as his mind evokes them his thoughts become enmeshed with them, and they stimulate his desires, controlling his actions and by the forces of attraction and repulsion regulating his outer circumstances and environment. He is himself the embodied memory of his own past. A man's psychic body is his Karma.

When the attention wanders aimlessly from one thing to another, wavering and never sharply focussed, and the mind associates ideas loosely and inaccurately, tracing false relations between them, illusion, or that which is not knowledge, results; and this not-knowledge (by which is not meant ignorance, which is merely the absence of knowledge) is said to be the cause of the material world, or rather of the terrestrial consciousness due to the limitations of the senses, whose erroneous impressions are distorted and wrongly related by the mind.

The first step on the path to liberation, therefore, is to gain the power of concentrating the attention and of tracing right relations between concepts. This fixed attention makes the impressions of concepts stronger and more vivid, while their accurate association enables the mind to recall them at will; and these are the essential conditions of retentive memory.

It was probably as part of this mental training that students in the ancient sacerdotal colleges had to memorize voluminous scriptures; and such writings appear to have been especially adapted to the purpose, having numerical keys and other mnemonic devices.

When the mind is brought under control, and is freed from the habitual tendency to wander purposelessly from concept to concept, the thoughts are stilled, the senses cease to go outward, and there is no longer the restless impulse to action; then it becomes possible to reach the real source of thought, the Nous, passing beyond the memory-impressions of the past and thereby becoming free from the individual karma.

A WORD OF EXPLANATION.

It is no wish to be captious nor over-critical that induces me to pen the following remarks upon an article which appeared in the August FORUM; but only a very sincere desire that, in giving out teachings to the world, we avoid doing so in a form which is apt to be misunderstood and entirely misinterpreted.

The article above referred to, entitled "The Law of Selfishness," while possibly in no danger of being misunderstood or misinterpreted by old and thorough theosophical students, yet, may run this risk in the case of the large majority of the Theosophical Society, and the outside world is almost certain to receive it wrongly. As to the enemies of the Theosophical Society and all those prejudiced against it and the theosophical teachings, it places in their hands a new weapon to wield against us.

That part of it will be so used I cannot doubt. For what could be more unfortunate, when quoted alone and left to stand for itself, without further explanation, than such sentences as these: "The highest, noblest, purest life is one of absolute and perfect Selfishness. Self is the God we should worship. Every action should be weighed and measured by its final effect upon ourselves, and the stronger the selfishness, the more we think of ourselves and the less we think of others, the better it is for ourselves and for mankind."...."The morality of Selfishness furnishes the strongest incentive by which men can be influenced. It is the 'religion' of science, knowledge and common sense." These sentences are unfortunate, to say the least of it. To appeal to the selfish on the basis of Selfishness could never bring forth the results which the author of the article doubtless had in view, whereas the unselfishly inclined would never need such an appeal, even though reaching results by the self same road.

It is dangerous to give out some of the theosophical teachings in certain forms. They are as yet too little understood to be handled otherwise than with circumspection and discretion. And surely the time is not yet when the world can rightly comprehend the doctrine of the *higher Selfishness*. Just now it needs, more than at any

other time in its life's history, to be helped in understanding and to be raised out of its lower selfishness, which, of course, was the motive inspiring the article under consideration. Yet, I think, people have to become quite thoroughly acquainted with theosophical teachings—assimilate them to a considerable extend even—before they are ready to be instructed and profitted by the law of Selfishness. To appeal to men's self-interest is a strictly business principle. Yet, even in this strictly business age and with a strictly business mind, it does not invariably work; for men's passions, emotions and impulses are constantly throwing them off the track of their self-interest.

Knowing the world to be so intensely and absorbingly selfish, our author makes his appeal in this particular form, hoping to lift the people *en masse,* to a higher plane by showing how a quality—so base in its present use—can become the leverage whereby the attainment of all their desires can be ultimately and perfectly won.

Yet he must also have kept in view that appeals to men's self-interest are not infallible. He should have hesitated longer ere putting his appeal to them as the last resort. He should also have measured the length of the way lying between the selfishness of the lower nature and that higher selfishness which abandons the personal self in reaching out to all other selves on the way to final absorption in the One Self. The distance is too great to be traveled in any one life. And the majority of souls not only have not entered it, but as yet have not become aware of it.

That we can in no way injure others without likewise injuring ourselves is a truth—instinctive in the human heart—finding daily its fuller outward recognition. Could men realize this truth, could they grasp all of its meaning and import, they might be helped by an appeal through the law of Selfishness. But they are held too closely in the clutch of their *personal selfishness* to do this; and even their self-interest will not carry them very far on this road pointed out to them.

Those who are in any way ready to profit by the higher teachings, will do so more readily through appeals to the nobler, purer parts of their nature, while ignoring, more or less, their baser parts. For they dare not let go the lower ere they have gained some strong

hold upon the higher. By always emphasizing the *higher,* I think we shall have better success than by teaching men to mount lofty heights by ladders commonly used to reach base, material ends, founded on self ignorance and ignoble.

That mankind is growing sick of its selfishness and begins to suspect, that the way to its Heart's-Desire is not, after all, by the road of selfish action, but must be sought some other way, is a lesson the student of human nature learns every day in his contact with others.

Words are said to be "living things," and around and about the word "Selfishness" is grouped a mass of repulsive and ignoble thoughts and images. Being presented without due commentary it runs the risk that the world will cry out "Avaunt."

It must go through a long purgation ere it can come among us and be received with confidence and honor.

"Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun.

"Let not the fierce sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferers eye.

"But let each burning human tear drop on thy heart and there remain; nor ever brush it off until the pain that caused it is removed."

The above quotations from the "Voice of the Silence," apparently sound in utter discordance to the article on the "Law of Selfishness," yet for whoever endeavours to realize the nature of the true Self, the one and the other equally speak of the ideal state; when true Selfishness will find its goal and its crown in Selflessness.

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